

To: "Poole, Kate" [kpoole@nrdc.org]; Nelson, Barry" [bnelson@nrdc.org]; Hal Candee (external)" [hcandee@altshulerberzon.com]; Ann Hayden" [ahayden@edf.org]; Jon Rosenfield, Ph.D." [jon.tbi@gmail.com]; Cynthia Koehler" [ckoehler@edf.org]; Kim Delfino" [KDelfino@defenders.org]
From: "Obegi, Doug"
Sent: Tue 11/23/2010 5:08:39 PM
Subject: Westlands quoted saying that it's ok if BDCP delivers less water, if its more reliable
<http://www.capitalpress.com/california/ws-BDCP-112610>

The Capitol Press (an agricultural trade journal) has an article out today on how irrigators are committed to the BDCP, and more importantly, quotes Sarah Woolf of Westlands as saying that reduced water deliveries under BDCP would be ok if the supplies become reliable:

"Some of that frustration has come from indications that water deliveries could shrink under a finalized BDCP, Woolf said. But Westlands accepts that outcome if supplies become reliable, she said."

Ummm... doesn't that quote seem to be the exact opposite of their letter and press release today, withdrawing from the BDCP process? The full story is pasted below.

<http://www.capitalpress.com/california/ws-BDCP-112610>

Tuesday, November 23, 2010 8:29 AM

Irrigators committed to Delta plan despite disappointments

Tempers among irrigators appear to have settled since the steering committee of the Bay Delta Conservation Plan published a progress report on Nov. 18. The effort to restore the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is taking heat from all sides after falling behind schedule.

By WES SANDER

Capital Press

Farm water interests say they've invested too much in a plan to save the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta to pull out now, as they have reportedly considered doing.

When the steering committee of the Bay Delta Conservation Plan published a progress report on Nov. 18, it was criticized from all sides -- for shortcomings in its details as well as for falling well behind schedule.

Following the report's release, irrigation districts were talking of disengaging from the process. Officials of Westlands Water district, which covers a sprawling agricultural area on the San Joaquin Valley's dry westside, reportedly stormed out of a meeting with federal Bureau of Reclamation officials.

But tempers seem to have cooled in the days since. Irrigators won't withdraw from the BDCP because they've invested too much in the process, said Mike Wade, executive director of the California Farm Water Coalition.

"The districts did not spend four years and invest a hundred million dollars to have less water than they have now," Wade said. "They don't want to give up.

"I'm optimistic," Wade said. "A lot has been done."

The BDCP, initiated four years ago by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, is an effort involving state and federal agencies to balance species protections with water deliveries from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, the hub of California's water-distribution system.

The plan centers on a canal or tunnel that would divert water from the Sacramento River before it reaches the Delta, a configuration meant to stabilize flows through the estuary.

The Schwarzenegger administration had aimed to finalize the BDCP by this fall, but now says the timeline will stretch into next summer.

The Bay Institute, an environmental group that sits on the steering committee, expressed "disappointment" with "very serious, systematic flaws" in the progress report. But the group "remains committed to continuing this essential work," said Bay Institute Director Christina Swanson and biologist Jonathan Rosenfield in a joint statement.

Sarah Woolf, spokeswoman for the agricultural Westlands Water District on the San Joaquin Valley's westside, admitted frustration on the part of Westlands and other irrigators. But that's to be expected in a high-stakes

negotiating process, she said.

"It's day-to-day," Woolf said. "I know there have been moments when we've been disillusioned and there have been moments when we've been happy. It's a very challenging effort for everyone. The solutions are not easy."

Some of that frustration has come from indications that water deliveries could shrink under a finalized BDCP, Woolf said. But Westlands accepts that outcome if supplies become reliable, she said. Irrigation water for the San Joaquin Valley dwindled as drought and species-protection rules took their toll in the past three years.

"We've been suffering for a while now, and have not seen any improvement in the water situation," Woolf said. "It gets frustrating when agencies say they are committed to solutions but nothing happens."

Doug Obegi

Staff Attorney

Water Program

Natural Resources Defense Council

111 Sutter Street, 20th Floor

San Francisco, CA94104

415.875.6100 (phone)

415.875.6161 (facsimile)